DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 690 JC 990 623

TITLE	[Minneapolis Community & Technical College (MCTC): A Scenario for 2003]. A Speculative Look at the College's Future.
INSTITUTION	Minneapolis Community and Technical Coll., MN.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	16p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; *Educational Change; *Educational Development; *Educational Planning; *Futures (of Society); *Long Range Planning; Perspective Taking; Role Perception; Technical Institutes; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

This paper asserts that one of the ways for a college to determine its continually changing future is to develop plausible scenarios, become familiar with them, and make decisions based on a broad playing field of possibilities. This paper records Minneapolis Community and Technical College's (MCTC) first attempt at a future scenario. Members of the college's Strategic Planning Committee and others from across the campus came together to develop "stories" about the college's future. The resulting scenario is not meant to be seen as a definitive plan or set of decisions. It is, in fact, a "speculative tale" about the current perceptions of the future. From a practical standpoint, the college is helped by taking "an imaginative leap into the future." Once there, the college can take stock of its surroundings and begin planning for the future from the future. This futuristic paper begins with a preface that sets the time in 2003, 7 years after MCTC became a comprehensive community and technical college. According to the scenario, the faculty, staff, and administration have built a highly regarded, student-centered college known for high-quality educational programs that consistently meet community needs and provide a solid gateway to lifelong learning. (VWC)

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[Minneapolis Community & Technical College (MCTC): A Scenario for 2003]
A Speculative Look at the College's Future

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A SPECULATIVE LOOK AT THE COLLEGE'S FUTURE

"The future ain't what it used to be," says Yogi Bera. Truer words were never spoken.

So, how can the college determine its future if the future is always a moving target? One way is to develop plausible scenarios, get familiar with them and make decisions based on a broad playing field of possibilities.

What follows is the college's first attempt at a future scenario. Members of the College's Strategic Planning Committee and others from across the campus came together to develop "stories" about our future. The resulting scenario is not meant to be seen as a definitive plan or set of decisions. It is, in fact, a "speculative tale" about our current perceptions of the future. But from a practical standpoint, it does help us make "an imaginative leap into the future" and see it as a real place. Once there, we can take stock of our surroundings and begin planning for the future from the future.

We hope that this scenario prompts you to spend some time in MCTC's future and to build upon what you find. Better yet, change the future presented here or create a totally new scenario. Your thoughts, critiques, additions, changes and creations will serve as key topics for future strategic planning discussions.

Thank you.

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Preface

It has been seven years since MCTC became a comprehensive community and technical college. The sudden shift in 1996 from two distinctly different colleges to a single urban institution of 10,000 students had been extremely challenging. Nevertheless, the faculty, staff and administration have built a highly regarded, student centered college known for high quality educational programs that consistently meet community needs and provide a solid gateway to lifelong learning.

If you ask people in the metropolitan area which college "makes individual dreams achievable," the answer most often given is Minneapolis Community and Technical College.

Academic Excellence

MCTC has doubled its enrollment since 1996 and now serves close to 20,000 students each year. This increase is due in large part to its hard won reputation for academic excellence. The following are examples of the college's recent accomplishments in this area:

- MCTC has changed its entire approach to manufacturing and technologies education by moving from small specialties to one large, integrated program (Industrial Technologies) that promotes a multi-skilled learning environment. Various specialty units are now working with each other to provide a broader educational and job

opportunity base. For example, upholstery faculty are now working with automotive and aviation mechanics faculty to teach students how to repair and refurbish cars and planes. Another example shows HVAC, construction electricity, cabinet making, upholstery and architectural technology working together to prepare students for careers in interior design and the implementation of those designs.

- Manufacturing and technologies education has become "state-of-the-art" with regard to equipment and applications. High-end technologies are now used to teach rapid prototyping, perimeter modeling, stereo lithography, high-end CAD, and automated systems. This high tech approach now allows the college to create more dynamic career opportunities and stronger relationships with upper division colleges. This is especially true for engineering schools, which are being pressed by employers to produce graduates with more hands-on experience. MCTC's emphasis on practical applications now fits hand in glove with the engineering schools that focus on theoretical, textbook approaches.

- Machine Tool has moved to NIMS certification and is able to certify exactly what skills and level of expertise each graduate holds based on nationally accepted standards agreed to by employers. A third year of special training (patternmaking, technical foundry applications, computer design, etc.) now compliments the Machine Tool program to provide a continuing career ladder and greater occupational choice to students.

- The new teacher preparation program, in partnership with St. Cloud and Mankato State, is drawing significant new enrollments to MCTC. This urban-centered program, which is highly diverse, offers the first two years toward teacher certification on campus using MCTC faculty. The second two years, taught by St. Cloud and Mankato State faculty, are also offered on the MCTC campus to provide urban students with a more convenient location and day-to-day access to Twin City schools. Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools have worked closely with MCTC, Mankato and St. Cloud in developing the curriculum. As a result, the boards of those public school systems have agreed to hire graduates of this program one step above entry level salaries. They are also offering 15 full-scholarship grants to high achieving, city school students who agree to teach in Minneapolis or St. Paul for no less than two years after graduation.

- MCTC's Global College Exchange Program now includes articulation agreements with eight colleges in France, Japan, Germany, and Australia. One hundred MCTC students and ten faculty are now studying or teaching abroad. An equal number of students and faculty from those four countries are now in residence at MCTC.

- A cross-curricular committee has developed a course syllabus process that places a global component within all instructional fields. All students are now developing a clearer sense of how their training relates to international views and markets.

- The performance component of both theatre and music programs at MCTC has been significantly expanded through partnerships with the city's arts community and many of the area's four year colleges. Visible signs of this expansion include the establishment of a chamber orchestra and an experimental theatre group. Children and adults are also attending summer camps centered on the performing arts at MCTC.

- Advisory committees composed of external leaders from the education and employment community have been established to advise faculty and administration for liberal arts and sciences program. This approach is similar to the one used for decades by the college's technical programs.

- .The technical and liberal arts faculty has collaboratively developed a cadre of general education courses that have become an integral part of the college's overall curriculum.

- The majority of four-year colleges and universities in the metropolitan area has recognized MCTC's preeminence in developmental education and has consequently contracted with the college to provide that instruction to their students. Contract revenue is targeted toward the construction of a new MCTC Developmental Education Center.

- Thanks to a collaborative agreement with Lifetime Fitness, a spa/fitness center has been opened on campus and is used to prepare students for employment in the health fitness industry (personal coaches, occupational therapy, etc.)

- A constructive assessment process for academic programs is fully supported by faculty, staff, and administration and the results are used continuously to strengthen existing academic programs and help in determining other academic opportunities that should be introduced at the college.

Lifelong Learning

Another reason for the college's dramatic increase in enrollment relates to its continuous education model. Examples of that model follow:

- A flexible, credit/non-credit partnership among the college's formal academic programs and the Division of Customized Training and Continuing Education has significantly strengthened the concept of "career laddering." Under this model, formal academic programs provide the "foundation" for career development. Once students are in specific fields, the Division of Customized Training and Continuing Education develops "enhancement courses" specifically for those students that keep them up to date in their career fields. For example, special summer seminars are held each year for MCTC alumni in the dental assistant program to keep them up to speed on new advances and skill sets required.

- "Seamless" transfer articulation agreements now allow MCTC students to move without loss of credits into any college or university in Minnesota.

- MCTC is widely known for its training and service approach to federal and state welfare reform legislation enacted in 1997 and has phased its program into what is now referred to as the Workforce Development Program. Based on its original action plan to help former welfare recipients reach self-sufficiency through appropriate training and support services, the college used what it learned to expand its efforts to the "working poor." The college now helps individuals in low paying, low skill jobs move up the career ladder through progressive training and employment networking. This program is the result of an intensive reassessment of curricular and student service offerings with particular attention to the needs of the "working poor."

Student Centered

- There is no doubt that MCTC's commitment to its students has been a significant factor in increasing the college's enrollment. Here are some examples of how that commitment has been applied:

- MCTC has created an academic schedule that balances student need for day, evening and weekend study. In 1998, the college perceived that a significant number of working students --particularly adult learners over the age of 25 - needed more evening and weekend courses given their job responsibilities during the day. This need was confirmed by an extensive marketing research project undertaken that year

by MnSCU. At the same time, the college recognized that a downturn in the economy could quickly reverse that trend as more and more adults are forced to take evening and weekend jobs. For that reason, the college created an early warning system that constantly monitored student-scheduling needs and allowed MCTC to readjust schedules quickly in response to such changes. Enrollment in evening and weekend courses at MCTC has increased by 400% since 1998

- MCTC now measures its success on the realization of student intent rather than number of degrees awarded. Students, upon initial registration at MCTC, indicate what educational value they expect from the college. Evidence of institutional success are now gauged against whether that value was received, be it in the form of an associate's degree, skill enhancement, credits needed to transfer, personal enrichment or other expected values. In the same regard, the college no longer refers to retention in the traditional sense. We now measure and refer to the rate of success each student has in reaching his or her intent.

- An agreement with a major downtown landlord has created affordable student housing for 250 individuals at a site just four blocks from the college. This initial effort, which is limited to single adults, will be expanded to include single parents in partnership with the Jeremiah Project over the next three years.

- Key faculty, staff, and administrators have become a cadre of mentors who provide individual support to current students and continue that relationship for a year after graduation.

Technology

All college classrooms are equipped with computers for student use.

- The college is now completely connected through technology and can easily access central databases and institutional analysis. That capability, which will be secured in some cases from external access, has eliminated many internal communication barriers and created a stronger sense of community and family. For example, faculty and staff now go to the college's website to learn not only about the college but about "happenings" in the lives of their colleagues (birthdays, awards, deaths, etc.).

- A Computer Technology and Innovation Center has been built on campus, supporting computer science programs, computer application instruction for the Industrial Technologies program, and "test sites" for Twin Cities industries who need help upgrading their systems. This center also provides specialized interactive facilities for non-native speakers, disabled students, and Senior Net participants.

- Language conversion software is now used to allow non-native speakers to enroll in introductory transfer and occupational courses while strengthening their English skills. The intent is to promote student interest and progress in discrete academic programs while they work through language difficulties. Counselors monitor student

progress in language skills and moderate this tandem program as necessary to insure that fluency in English remains the priority for this particular cohort. Immigration has doubled the number of non-native speakers enrolled at MCTC since 1998.

Facilities

- The Phillip C. Helland Center and the Irene H. Whitney Fine Arts Center have been significantly expanded. The first phase enlarged the buildings to the size indicated in the original specifications (both buildings were scaled down during construction as the project moved toward overruns). This first phase included extending the walls beyond the pillars facing Loring Park. The theatre was also enlarged and now accommodates 600 seats. The second phase has extended three floors of the Fine Arts Center over the former vacant lot at the corner of Spruce Place and Yale Place. This multi-purpose building, beyond housing the performing arts, also includes a business conference center. This center, fully equipped with the latest in media technology, can accommodate 200 attendees. The Customized Training and Continuing Education Program books the center, provides coordinating services for those leasing the facilities, and offers its own business seminars with high profile presenters and satellite linked programs. The building also includes a health fitness center, collaboratively operated with Lifetime Fitness. The fitness center is available to the college and the public.

- An $18 million Learning Resource Building, which houses both the college's Library and Instructional Technology Center, opened in 2001. This exciting new facility,

completely encased by windows, includes the latest in instructional media and technology. Its design also allows the college to maintain a bright, dramatic presence on Hennepin Avenue, particularly during the evening hours. The Minneapolis Planetarium relocated to this building in 2002 and includes new science laboratories and classrooms. Initial costs for the addition were borne by a special legislative allocation and bonding referendum. A business plan, which includes expected gate receipts from planetarium shows, has been developed that insures adequate revenue streams to cover operating and maintenance costs for the new facility. Hundreds of school students visit the planetarium each week and become familiar with the college as well.

- An agreement with a major downtown landlord has created affordable student housing for 250 individuals at a site just four blocks from the college. This initial effort, which is limited to single adults, will be expanded to include single parents in partnership with the Jeremiah Project over the next three years.

Human Resources

- Human Resources at MCTC is now a proactive unit that aggressively goes out into the field to recruit the best candidates. As part of this effort, HR representatives now visit colleges serving large numbers of minority students to help strengthen diversity among our faculty and staff.

- The Human Resources Department also creates dynamic opportunities for growth and promotion within the college. For example, this office has expanded cross-functional training throughout the college and instituted a "broad-band" approach to salaries. These actions have helped the college respond more rapidly to change by deploying multi-skilled faculty and staff to new tasks as needed.

- Bargaining unit contracts for faculty and staff have eliminated barriers to cross-functional and cross-curricular projects to give personnel a greater breadth of professional opportunities.

- Part-time faculty have become key resources in delivering the flexible academic schedules needed by students. High performing faculty in this category are identified and rewarded with salaries and benefits at parity with full time faculty. This process is aimed at developing a quality cadre of part-time faculty and retaining them. This insures that the college's reputation for instructional quality is maintained by both full-time and part-time faculty.

- One fifth of the faculty are given release time from one class each year to be used for professional development activities. This effort is reenergizing faculty across the campus and students, who have been generally satisfied with classroom performance, are giving faculty even higher grades on the annual Student Satisfaction Survey since this program was established in 2001.

Finance

- State and corresponding MnSCU appropriations have increased by 50% since the advent of "pay for performance" in 2002. Under this model, colleges receive funding based on their ability to produce outcomes that meet immediate community needs. Given the college's extensive institutional effectiveness plan which measures outcomes for all its core functions and programs, MCTC has proven itself to be both a good and necessary investment. Positive results relative to underrepresented student outcomes, overall placement and transfer rates, high grades from employers, and the college's willingness to institute changes rapidly to meet emerging community needs have played a particularly important role in the appropriation increase. This increase has been used to bolster student services unique to an urban institution, to provide resources needed to reinvigorate the college's academic programs, and to develop new academic programs particularly suited to our student population.

- Customized Training has increased its business and community agency contracts by 500% since 1998 and now accounts for additional revenues of over $6 million. Portions of that revenue are used to help enrich academic programs and student services across the campus.